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Birgit Meyer

Aesthetics of Persuasion: Global Christianity and Pentecostalism's Sensational Forms

Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body.
—Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*

By virtue of its foundational premise to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” Christianity is a world religion.¹ This raises the question of what is new—empirically and conceptually—about the notion of “global Christianity.” This notion spotlights a new, distinct mode through which Christianity becomes manifest in the world, which calls for special attention. *New* here refers both to current empirical phenomena—emergent modes of religiosity that did not exist before—and to theoretical innovation, which has repercussions for past and present conceptualizations. Thus, the framework of global Christianity allows us not only to grasp actual present-day transformations but also to develop alternative approaches, through which our understandings of Christianity as we know it are altered.

As scholars have noted, Pentecostal/charismatic churches are central to the globalization of Christianity in our time, and in this sense, Pentecostalism provides, as Ruth Marshall writes, the

“contemporary archetype of Christianity as ‘a community without an institution,’ but a community of a new type, proper to the forms of diffuse, individualized, and nonisomorphic forms of connectedness in our globalized world.”² Actively endorsing global outreach, Pentecostal/charismatic churches operate in, or at least aspire to, global networks that bring together born-again Christians under the Holy Spirit, who is everywhere, not tied to one privileged locality. A “transposable message” and “portable practices” are vital to Pentecostalism’s globalization project.³ The Holy Spirit pervades all human-made boundaries and yet is not an elusive, purely transcendental abstraction because it is held to operate from behind the surface of appearances, from which it affects the course of things in the material world.

The all-pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit goes along with the valuation of the body as a vessel for divine power. The Holy Spirit is an experiential presence that invokes feelings. One of the most salient features of Pentecostal/charismatic churches is their sensational appeal; they often operate via music and powerful oratory, through which born-again Christians are enabled to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit *with* and *in* their bodies, wherever they are, and to act on such feelings. *Sensational* may well be understood as both appealing to the senses *and* spectacular. Echoing the current craving for sensations and experiences in the framework of religion, Pentecostal/charismatic churches emphasize the importance of sensing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit directly and immediately. As the embodied presence of God, the Holy Spirit is a portable power source. Having such sensations of divine presence does not happen unexpectedly but requires the existence of a particular shared religious aesthetic, through which the Holy Spirit becomes accessible and perceptible.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Pentecostal/charismatic churches have received a great deal of attention from social scientists. In much of the current literature, the churches in this admittedly broad spectrum are viewed through a Protestant lens. Such a perspective, indebted to the work of Max Weber, has alerted scholars to the remarkable elective affinities between the spread of capitalism and Pentecostalism’s appeal, as well as to the tendency to fission into ever more independent organizations, or to the iconoclastic attitude toward religious objects accentuated in both Protestant and Pentecostal/charismatic churches, which decries Catholicism and indigenous religious traditions as “idol worship.”⁴ However, the analysis of Pentecostalism via Protestantism also creates a nar-

rowed view, impeding a fuller understanding of the central tenets of Pentecostalism in our time, especially its sensational dimension.⁵ In addition, the lens itself is problematic, privileging a particular view of Protestantism as a rational, disenchanting religion that transcends the body, the senses, and outward religious forms. It fails to account for some crucial aspects of Protestantism.

My prime concern here is to develop some alternative concepts that expand our view of Pentecostalism as it is viewed through this Protestant lens. To do so, I build on works that emphasize the “materiality” of religion—for example, the value attributed to bodies, things, texts, and gestures, so as to make the divine tangible in the immanent.⁶ First, I critically discuss the severance of aesthetics and Protestantism, and the concomitant dismissal of form in the pathbreaking work of Max Weber. I argue for the need to recapture an understanding of religion as aesthetics, albeit taken in Aristotle’s broad sense of *aisthesis*. I then present the notion of the *sensational form*, so as to grasp how the Holy Spirit operates according to Pentecostal understanding and experience, and to appreciate its material dimension. Third, via the *aesthetics of persuasion*, I seek to frame conceptually the interface of religion, sensation, and politics in order to understand the broader modalities of binding and the politics of belonging, paying attention to Jacques Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible.”⁷ Taking Pentecostalism as a prominent representative of global Christianity, I seek not only to enhance our understanding of its particular sensational religiosity but also to outline new directions for the broader study of Protestantism and Christianity in general, taking into account the importance of materiality. Global Christianity thus becomes a new framework that renders visible hitherto overlooked aspects of Protestantism.

Religion and Aesthetics: Weber and Beyond

More than one hundred years after the publication of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber’s work still leaves its mark on the study of both Protestantism and, more broadly, modern religion.⁸ According to Weber, with its fundamental critique of Catholicism as falsely attributing power to human-made sacraments and rituals—the legacy of magical religiosity—Calvinist Protestantism instigated the irreversible “disenchantment” of the world.⁹

While Weber’s work has proven fertile for research on religion—for

instance, by calling for the discernment of elective affinities between the spheres of religion and the market—it also has considerable limitations. My central argument here is that the marked sensational dimension of Pentecostalism calls us to revisit critically Weber’s distinction between magical religiosity, which attributes power to religious acts, substances, and rituals, and rational “salvation religions,” which aim for pure, immediate experience that occurs without fixed religious rituals and forms. In so doing, I wish to complement the work of Matthew Engelke, Peter J. Pels, and Webb Keane on the genealogy of the current dematerialized understanding of modern religion in general and Protestantism in particular.¹⁰ Whereas these authors have mainly concentrated on E. B. Tylor’s intellectualist approach to religion (famously described as “belief in spiritual beings”) and Saussurean structural linguistics that asserted the arbitrariness of the signifier, as being formative for meaning-centered approaches in the study of religion, I focus on Weber as another foundational author whose work underpins the Protestant lens.¹¹

Although the distinction between magical religiosity and salvation religions informs *The Protestant Ethic*, it is more clearly expressed in Weber’s “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions,” in which he compares different religious traditions’ attitudes to the world by examining them in a number of spheres: economic, political, aesthetic, erotic, and intellectual. He posits an evolutionary scheme, according to which salvation religions—epitomized by Protestantism—are on the highest level. Of particular interest here is Weber’s section on aesthetics, in which he addresses the link between magical religiosity and art.¹²

Mentioning key dimensions of religion—artifacts, music, dance, buildings, and so on—Weber stresses the initial synthesis of religion and art, suggesting that the former was the cradle of the latter. This synthesis brought about the development of particular religious “styles,” which established traditions that would convey particular magical religious effects. Weber regards this stereotyped religiosity—its outward forms geared toward magical efficacy—as “lower” than the religiosity of salvation religions. He contrasts it with an alternative, higher religiosity that is severed from art: the “religious ethic of brotherliness” characteristic of salvation religions.¹³ Valuing religious bonds with fellow believers higher than blood ties and revering faith more than earthly pleasures, this ethic endorses a distancing attitude toward the world in general and art and aesthetics in particular:

For the religious ethic of brotherliness, just as for *a priori* ethical rigorism, art as a carrier of magical effects is not only devalued but even suspect. The sublimation of the religious ethic and the quest for salvation, on the one hand, and the evolution of the inherent logic of art, on the other, have tended to form an increasingly tense relation. All sublimated religions of salvation have focused on the meaning alone, not upon the form, of the things and actions relevant for salvation. *Salvation religions have devalued form as contingent, as something creaturely and distracting from meaning.*¹⁴

Weber seems to endorse the devaluation of form by salvation religions. His rather dismissive stance on art and aesthetics, in contrast with his focus on meaning, is also expressed in his essay on the sociology of religion, in which he suggests a parallel between the religious devaluation of art and the devaluation of magical, orgiastic, ecstatic, and ritual elements of religiosity in favor of ascetic and spiritual-mystic elements.¹⁵ He asserts that rational religions (by which he means Judaic rational reform movements, original Christianity, and ascetic Protestantism) had in common the condemnation of “uninhibited surrender to the distinctive form-producing values of art.”¹⁶ This invokes a strong opposition between rational religiosity and matters of the world, particularly the aesthetic, erotic, and political spheres. From Weber’s stance, art appears as potentially blasphemous.

Weber submits that in practice the relation between art and religion could be restored. The renewed synthesis comes about when religions aspire to spread out: “The more they wished to be universalist mass religions and were thus directed to emotional propaganda and mass appeals, the more systematic were their alliances with art.”¹⁷ Weber suggests here a tension between universal outreach and the purity of the message. Even from the perspective of his own model, which associates the evolution of religion with its severance from aesthetics, this signals a paradox: the incompatibility of universal spread and religious rationality eliminates the ability of salvation religions to universalize. However, since universal outreach is a central feature of Christianity and thus also of Protestantism (as witnessed in the nineteenth-century missionary project of bringing the Gospel to the “heathens”), one may wonder whether a dismissal of art (and thus of things, form, and style) would be possible. I will return to this tension and the limitation of Weber’s model in more detail.¹⁸

Let us start with how contemporary Pentecostalism challenges Weber’s

contrast between art/aesthetics and rational salvation. In a compelling essay, Bernice Martin argues:

It is obviously a salvation religion, patently and powerfully an ethic of brotherhood, and so might be expected to veer towards the anti-art position. On the other hand, Weber's characterization of the elements of "magical" efficacy traditionally mediated through aesthetic practices employing music, gesture and dance also has persuasive application in Pentecostal liturgical practices and charismatic performances, although the role Weber attributes to sacred buildings and artifacts is less obvious in the Pentecostal case. Further, Pentecostalism, the offspring of Methodism and its tradition of the "warmed heart," clearly comes under Weber's characterization of a universalist religion directed to mass appeal, which uses aesthetic media as vehicles of "emotional propaganda."¹⁹

Martin goes on to say that Pentecostalism "embodies multiple paradoxes" and does not fit neatly into Weber's model.²⁰ Discussing Pentecostalism's embrace of modern communication technologies, its use of music, and the "style of worship in which the Gifts of the Spirit manifest themselves in glossolalia, prophecy, healings and other charismata," Martin states that these practices "are inescapably aesthetic modes of human action in that they have form as well as—and, in an important sense, inextricable from—content and message."²¹ For this reason, Martin's characterization of Pentecostalism as paradoxical stops short of a more fundamental critique of Weber's model, which she leaves more or less intact. As this model still underpins a great deal of work on modern religion, such a fundamental critique is of key importance. It forms an indispensable starting point for a reconceptualization of aesthetics as intrinsic to modern religion, including not only Pentecostalism but also Protestantism. This endeavor involves two central, interrelated issues: Weber's narrow understanding of and dismissive attitude toward aesthetics, and the privileging of content and meaning above form.

Regarding the first issue, it is important to recall the evolution sketched by Weber from a broad notion of aesthetics bound up with religion to a narrow notion of aesthetics as located in the separate sphere of art, which is in disagreement with but may also be a replacement for religion. This is not typical of Weber alone but echoes post-Enlightenment understandings of aesthetics. In the aftermath of the proposition by eighteenth-century Ger-

man philosopher Alexander Baumgarten to establish *aesthetica* as a new science of sensuous knowing, the field became a central theme for thinkers of the Enlightenment and beyond. Baumgarten advocated a broad understanding of aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis*, which refers to humans' capacity to perceive the world with their five senses and to interpret it through these perceptions.²² This broad understanding was subsequently narrowed, and aesthetics became more or less confined to the autonomous sphere of art and the beautiful, which became the privileged realm for a discourse on the body and sensation in modern society. Here it is important to invoke Immanuel Kant, because his thinking still shapes the way in which aesthetics is understood.²³ Kant identified art as the domain for aesthetic judgment. Deriving from the work of art itself, the appreciation of beauty requires a disinterested beholder and yet depends on a feeling that is objective by virtue of being shared by others. Understood in this sense, art and aesthetics become constitutive of the *sensus communis aestheticus* (*aesthetischer Gemeinsinn* in the German original).²⁴

As Terry Eagleton explains, Kant's understanding of aesthetics as expressive of our universal human faculty of judgment, which predisposes us to feel the same, irrespective of our own subjective interests and decisions, provided a new ideological paradigm for bourgeois society.²⁵ Thus, art invoked a new kind of *sensus communis* distinct from, and a potential substitute for, religion (as emphasized in romanticism). Art and religion, in the sense of magical religiosity, have in common the mobilization of sensations and experiences that are located in the body and stand in contrast to rational thinking. In other words, modern discourses on aesthetics and religion of the magical religiosity type are inscribed in the dualism of body and mind. Such discourses recognize the importance of sensations, yet view them as subordinate, if not inferior, to rational thinking. By including aesthetics in this dualism, the broader meaning of *aisthesis* as comprising sensations *and* knowledge is lost. However, being "born as a discourse of the body," aesthetics cannot fully be contained in the limited realm of the arts and the hierarchical mind-body dualism.²⁶ Even though the narrowing of aesthetics cannot simply be undone by a wishful return to Aristotle, it is important to stress that there is something excessive about the body, sensations, and experience that demands more encompassing approaches so as to move our thinking about aesthetics out of the mind-body straightjacket.²⁷

This was clearly not Weber's concern, and it is symptomatic of a broader Protestant attitude about religion.²⁸ Weber's dismissive attitude toward

art and aesthetics resonates well with Protestant misgivings about the use of material forms in communicating with and about God. While Catholic theology acknowledges the role of aesthetics in enabling religious experience (after all, sacraments require ritual forms, just as the presence of God materializes via images—a process theologically conceptualized as *kenosis*), Protestant theology adopts a far more skeptical stance that makes it blind to its own aesthetics. Of course, this is grounded in the much-invoked iconoclasm of the Reformation that challenged the Catholic use of images as mediators between people and God.²⁹ Iconoclasts argued against not just the use of religious images but the clerics' power claims that operated through the images. Nonetheless, a radically iconoclastic stance—rejecting images and aesthetics—has serious shortcomings, because it misrecognizes the nature of Christianity as bridging a distance between people and God that requires images, or even that religion requires some kind of bridging forms.

Here it is instructive to turn briefly to the early-nineteenth-century Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, known for his romanticist view of religion as the feeling of *schlechthinnigen Abhängigkeit* that was distinct from—and could thus coexist with on a higher level—rational thinking. Even though Schleiermacher regarded art and religion as “two befriended souls,” he strongly disliked aestheticism, which he associated with Catholicism.³⁰ Aestheticism was problematic because it substituted true religion with the worship of church art and thus endorsed the power of the church, not of God. This view is echoed by Weber, who was well read in Schleiermacher's work. Yet, the dismissal of aestheticism did not resolve the problem that God, even when regarded as beyond human understanding and thus not capable of being captured in ritual forms and images, needs to be present to believers in some way. This problem of presence does not just arise with the prominence of global Pentecostalism but is intrinsic to Protestantism.³¹ In this sense, the phenomenon of Pentecostalism, in which aesthetics so obviously is “an inescapably important resource,” pushes the lingering question of aesthetics and the feeling body—and, as I will explain, of religious forms—to the forefront.³²

Twentieth-century Calvinist theologian Karl Barth insisted that the relation between humans and God does not originate in human thinking and actions but in the Holy Spirit alone. Thus, he rejected theologies that gave room to human action in shaping the relation with God; in his view this would entail the worship of human-made forms that were mistaken

for God. As *der ganz Andere*, however, God resists human representation. Nonetheless, Barth struggled with the question of how to theologically grasp the beauty of God: "If we can and must say that God is beautiful, to say this is to say how *He enlightens and convinces and persuades us. It is to describe not merely the naked fact of His revelation or its power, but the shape and form in which it is a fact and is power.*"³³ The notion of beauty put forward by Barth echoes Enlightenment views of aesthetics as concerned with beauty (e.g., Kant) but differs from these views in that it invokes a beauty related not to art but to God. As Richard Viladesau explains in *Theological Aesthetics*, in good Protestant tradition Barth was wary of lapsing into aestheticism, fearing that God's beauty "becomes the beauty of an idol."³⁴ So there is a tension in his theology between the recognition of the importance of form—understood as that without which beauty cannot be conveyed—and the fear of falling into the worship of images.³⁵

Let us return to the privileging of content and meaning above form. Recall Weber's statement about salvation religions as having "devalued form as contingent, as something creaturely and distracting from meaning." While this view may resonate with Protestant self-descriptions, Barth suggested that even within Protestantism matters are more complicated. After all, Barth recognized that shape and form are a necessary condition in order for the reality and power of God to show. He even suggested that form has a particular power of attraction, through which God "enlightens and convinces and persuades us." Indeed, religious forms convey a particular aesthetics of persuasion, through which a divine transcendental presence is to be perceived as real and powerful.

In sum, while the antiaesthetic approach of Protestantism (and by implication, the downplaying of form, things, and sensations) privileged by Weber resonates with Protestant theology and self-descriptions, his statement about the devaluation of form in salvation religions such as Protestantism should be regarded with skepticism. The devaluation, if not condemnation, of form at the expense of pure meaning is—as Pentecostalism reminds us—empirically wrong. The contrast between religions (of the "magical religiosity" type) that are still indebted to the sphere of aesthetics and rational religions such as Protestantism conveys a deeply problematic understanding that has shaped not only current approaches to Protestantism but also, as Talal Asad and Webb Keane argue, the modern study of religion at large.³⁶ In order to be present in the world, let alone to reach out, religion requires tangible, sensational forms. Therefore, one should ana-

lyze religion as offering a particular aesthetics, provided we leave behind suspicions as voiced by Weber's model and ground our understanding of aesthetics beyond the mind-body divide.

Moreover, the disregard of aesthetics and form, coupled with the mistaken assumption that salvation religions leave aesthetics and form behind, occludes the possibility of a critique of aesthetics and the ways in which religious forms appeal and persuade. Weber's view that aesthetics and art are called in to serve "emotional propaganda and mass appeals" on the part of religions with universal aspirations locks aesthetics into the sphere of irrational feelings that are mobilized for questionable ends. Remaining within an intrareligious devaluation of religious forms and a rejection of idol worship and blasphemy, this stance fails to acknowledge, and critically engage with, the mobilization of sensational forms in the aesthetics of persuasion.

Sensational Forms

In the study of religion, form receives far too little attention and appreciation. Form is regarded as something that distracts from and is merely a necessary vehicle of content. The downfall of form in Weber's narrative occurs in favor of the appraisal of pure meaning and is ultimately the genesis of a more rational attitude that transcends feeling. But approaches that stress the importance of feelings, following in the footsteps of William James, downplay form in favor of genuine experience.³⁷ This stress on the existence of primary, individual, authentic, and, in this sense, seemingly unmediated religious feelings is misleading, because it neglects the role of religious organizations and institutions in providing forms through which such feelings can occur repeatedly. Despite major differences between Weber and James, both converge in devaluing form in favor of a religiosity that can do without, privileging meaning (for the former) or experience (for the latter). Again, while this devaluation of form may resonate with internal perspectives—certainly within Protestant theology—it is misleading in a theoretical sense.

One of the main concerns in the study of Protestantism today should be the reappraisal of form (and of related areas such as style) as central to religious aesthetics. Therefore, I have created the notion of *sensational form*. The concept is based on my understanding of religion as a practice of mediation between the levels of humans and God (or some transcendental

realm or force).³⁸ The notion of mediation posits the existence of a distance between these levels that is bridged by sensational forms. I do not use *form* in opposition to but as a necessary condition for expressing content and meaning and ethical norms and values; form is also not a static container but a modality or device that allows for repeated—and in that sense, to invoke Weber again, “stereotyped”—action.

Sensational forms are authorized modes for invoking and organizing access to the transcendental that shape both religious content (beliefs, doctrines, sets of symbols) and norms. Involving religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and patterns of feeling, these forms play a central role in modulating practitioners as religious subjects. Thus, sensational forms are part of a specific religious aesthetics, which governs a sensory engagement of humans with the divine and each other and generates particular sensibilities. Religions operate through historically generated sensational forms that are distinctive and induce repeatable patterns of feeling and action. Sensational forms emerge over time and are often subject to contestation and even abandonment (as in the shift from image to text in the Reformation). They are thus an excellent point of entry into processes of religious transformation. While religions mobilize numerous sensational forms, certain ones achieve a special status that underpins a distinct religious identity, such as icon veneration for the Orthodox, Bible reading for Calvinists, or “praise and worship” and speaking in tongues for Pentecostals.

I developed the idea of the sensational form through my research on Pentecostalism in Ghana. In particular, I was struck by the specific way in which the spiritual and the physical are related in Pentecostal religiosity. Evil spirits are held to work through bodies, food, gifts, or commodities, and the Holy Spirit is perceived as a force that intervenes and fights evil powers by, for example, making evil spirits leave the body of a possessed person. Even though faith in God is often invoked, faith is not understood as an inner, spiritual attitude that one can keep to oneself but in a far more material sense. Spoken of as a “spiritual eye and spiritual hand,” faith is a device that assures born-again believers of God’s blessings. The concreteness of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit is also striking in regards to the prosperity gospel, according to which wealth is a divine blessing for the faithful born-again believer. This blessing is also revealed in the architecture of Pentecostal churches (ideally, huge auditoriums), Pentecostals’ presence in the media, or the lifestyles and looks of the pastors (posh cars, elegant clothes). Pentecostals’ misgivings regarding the “worship of

idols” attributed to indigenous religious traditions and Catholicism are not backed by a more broadly ascetic attitude that shuns the world (as Weber—mistakenly, as Campbell showed—assumed with regard to the early Calvinists).³⁹ There is a truly amazing Pentecostal material culture, including architecture, dress styles, music, books, audiovisual material, and all kinds of signs of good life, that is to a strong degree in consonance with neoliberal consumer capitalism, calling for in-depth scholarly analysis.

This brief sketch should suffice to pinpoint that Pentecostal religiosity is not merely geared to a transcendental, basically unknowable force. Nor is it purely materialistic and interested in outward matters. There is much concern with the stuff of the physical—bodies, things, images—which is, however, held to be imbued with and operated by either divine or demonic forces. Humans need to be active in order to be “filled” with and to feel the Holy Spirit, in order to develop the necessary sensibilities of the born-again believer, who senses—or sees, thanks to the spirit of discernment—lurking dangers that are invisible to the naked eye. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is a question of not just inner, contemplative spirituality but embodying divine power: only those filled with the Holy Spirit are held to be not vulnerable to evil spirits and empowered to lead an overall happy, healthy, and prosperous life. This implies that an approach that simply opposes the material and the spiritual, viewing the former as “merely” outward and the latter as what religiosity should really be about, misses the central point of Pentecostal faith—and indeed of Protestantism in general.⁴⁰

Considering sensational forms thus allows us to grasp exactly this confluence of the physical and the spiritual, or transcendental. Studying Pentecostalism via sensational forms offers a new lens, through which dualisms of matter and spirit, form and content, body and mind, are rejoined under a broader understanding of aesthetics. Exploring Pentecostal religiosity via sensational forms allows us to move beyond James’s approach of religious experience as primary; instead we can ask how authorized and shared religious forms for experiencing the Holy Spirit make personal experiences possible (and repeatable). From such a viewpoint, we can also acknowledge, contrary to Weber, that authorized religious forms are central to processes of meaning making and the shaping of the senses and bodies of believers. Thus, once sensational forms are used as an empirical entry into the study of Pentecostalism, it is possible to better understand both the genesis and the appeal of Pentecostal religiosity.

Let us briefly explore the heuristic value of the notion of sensational form

by turning to the experience of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal services, with their emphasis on praise and worship so as to call the Holy Spirit through powerful songs, offer a sensational form that seeks to involve believers in such a way that they sense the presence of God in a seemingly *immediate* manner and are amazed by His power. I have witnessed many such services, in which the pastor and congregation sing and pray for the Holy Spirit to come. After some time, the prayers become louder and louder, and many start speaking in tongues. This is taken as a sign that the Holy Spirit is manifest. At a certain moment the pastor indicates the end of the praise and worship session and may call on the Holy Spirit to heal the sick, protect the vulnerable, and expel demonic spirits. The desire for such a direct and *portable* link with the power of God via the Holy Spirit is what made, and still makes, many people migrate to Pentecostal/charismatic churches and to become born-again. Though in principle all born-again believers are able and entitled to *embody* the Holy Spirit, charismatic pastors are prime channels for divine power. Indeed, this is what their charisma depends on and what draws people into their churches, hoping that they will also be “filled” with the Holy Spirit permanently and receive protection against evil as well as “showers of divine blessings.”

Of course, attending a church service is just one way in which born-again Christians devote time to praise and worship. Virtual services are offered by numerous media programs on radio and television, in audiovisual materials, and on the Web. As the Holy Spirit does not enter and permanently stay in a person, Pentecostalism teaches a set of religious disciplines such as Bible study, extensive fasting, and intense individual and collective prayer in so-called prayer cells so that believers can become “strong in the spirit.”⁴¹ Many Pentecostal pastors have written about how to receive and keep the Holy Spirit through continued and intense prayer. Advertisements for writings by the famous Nigerian Pentecostal pastor Chris Oyakhilome, who runs a huge church called Christ Embassy and a global media empire, spotlight how the Holy Spirit is perceived:

Unlock the Power of the Holy Spirit within You!
 Don't Get Stuck in the Rut; Learn How to Make Your Faith Work!
 You and the Holy Spirit Can Make an Unbeatable Team That Will
 Impact Your World!⁴²

These slogans express well how the Holy Spirit is spoken about in a mundane language that stresses accessibility and action. The Holy Spirit is a

powerful, portable, and concrete embodied presence, and there seems to be little concern about the problem of a transcendence that eschews human understanding and action (as we encountered regarding Barth). On the contrary, each and every faithful believer needs to be active in order for the Holy Spirit to manifest itself in his or her life, so as to reach a point of reversal when he or she feels “seized” by it. While reaching the state of being filled with the Holy Spirit requires the internalization of shared techniques of the body or disciplines—a process of becoming “God’s subjects,” as Marshall puts it⁴³—the ultimate confirmation of its presence occurs through sensation. Indeed, invoked through shared religious sensational forms and concomitant disciplines, sensation is the personal authoritative index for the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

Analyzing personal and collective worship practices as sensational forms allows us to foreground the concrete actions and devices—the authorized structure of repetition—on which the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in born-again believers depends. Though they are felt individually, religious sensations are socially produced, and their stereotyped repetition depends on the existence of formalized, authorized practices that frame individual religious sensations and enable their reproducibility. That is why I talk about sensations in the double sense of persons having particular sensations and the actual inducement of these sensations via sensational forms.

Aesthetics of Persuasion

Understanding religion as offering a particular aesthetics, which forms religious subjects by tuning their senses and enabling modes of embodying the divine through sensational forms, brings together sensation and power. Aesthetics is not outside of power structures but enmeshed with them. Sensational forms induce techniques of the body that produce particular sensibilities. Religious sensational forms play a key part in the “distribution of the sensible,” that is, “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.”⁴⁵ Understood as “the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience,”⁴⁶ for Rancière aesthetics is not opposed to but is rather an inalienable part of politics. The *a priori* forms are not *given*, as in Kant’s notion of the *sensus communis* but are subject to the power of *distribution*, which implies a process of en- and disabling sense impressions

and a tuning and streamlining of the senses. The point is that *distribution* implies a political process of governing the very possibility of sensation. Here lies a major difference with regard to phenomenological approaches, which tend to neglect that sensation itself is not immediate but subject to social processes of forming.⁴⁷

While Rancière grants that aesthetics may be mobilized for demagogic, irrational mass politics (what Walter Benjamin calls the “aestheticization of politics”), he insists that it would be mistaken to reduce aesthetics to this negative use. Aesthetics may also be a site of potentiality and creation, located “on the side of the invention of sensible forms and material structures for a life to come”⁴⁸ and thus a resource for a critique of dominant politics.⁴⁹ Since humans are sentient beings, aesthetics is political and thus constitutes “specific orders of visibility and sense through which the political division into assigned roles and defined parts manifests itself.”⁵⁰

Even though Rancière and others inspired by his work barely address religion, the connection of aesthetics and politics speaks to my project of theorizing contemporary Pentecostalism. Recapturing aesthetics for the study of Pentecostalism and for religion in general will open up a new space for thinking about religion, politics, and sensations. Rancière’s ideas are important here, because they remove aesthetics and the senses from the depoliticized isolation in which they were placed by Enlightenment thinkers and they spotlight the role of senses and sensibilities in organizing what I call aesthetic formations or Beth Hinderliter’s “communities of sense.”⁵¹ Thus, the senses themselves are subject to modulation and tuning in the context of politico-religious regimes, yielding a particular experience of the world that involves horizontal links between people on the level of community, as well as vertical links to some higher force.⁵² Far from being confined to a mere personal, primary encounter, religious aesthetics thus authorizes a particular distribution of the sensible that opens up a space for religious experience, yet excludes—or even anesthetizes—other possibilities.⁵³ A focus on the authorized emphasis on certain sensations and the exclusion of others—the distribution of alternative “sensibles” in a broader field—would therefore be a fruitful starting point for a more sophisticated critique of aesthetics (and, by implication, of religion and politics) that moves beyond downright rejection or sublimation.

It’s important to explore how a Pentecostal distribution of the sensible relates to—overlaps with, enhances, diverts from, challenges, and contradicts—alternative distributions, such as those launched by the nation-

state. Following Rancière, in exploring this, it would be mistaken to reiterate conventional distinctions between religion and politics, as both have aesthetics — “born out of the discourse of the body,” to invoke Eagleton once more⁵⁴ — as a common ground. For instance, in the wake of the 2008 elections in Ghana, there was considerable resonance between the way in which Pentecostal/charismatic churches defined the nation as a site of “spiritual war” and the rhetorical strategies of the competing political parties, which absorbed some Pentecostal discourse, talking about politics in terms of spiritual forces and celebrating vigilance and peacefulness as prime characteristics of citizens as, preferably, Pentecostal Christians. Ghanaian president John Atta Mills stresses that he has been elected by God and says that he wishes Ghana to become one big prayer camp.⁵⁵ This points toward an emergent political theology grounded in the Holy Spirit. However, as Ruth Marshall argues with regard to Nigeria, this political theology is intrinsically unstable because the central importance attributed to personal spiritual experience tends to work against the creation of stable forms of sovereignty and community.⁵⁶

How can the appeal of Pentecostalism’s sensational forms, which govern a particular distribution of the sensible, be explored? Here the notion of aesthetics of persuasion comes in. Aesthetics is part of “lived religion” on the level of everyday experiences, offering sensational forms that repeatedly persuade people of the truth and reality of their sensations. It should be noted that persuasion does not imply a “free” subject yet to be persuaded. Instead, an aesthetics of persuasion itself works within religious structures of repetition. Most of the people addressed by sensational forms are already constituted as particular religious subjects with certain desires and doubts. Thus, aesthetics of persuasion is intrinsic to sensational forms, whose power convinces religious believers of the truthfulness of the connection between them and God or the transcendental. In short, aesthetics of persuasion is responsible for the “truth effects” of religion, for instance, by authorizing the body as the harbinger of ultimate truth and authenticity.⁵⁷

Persuasion is based on classical views of rhetoric, in which it is analyzed as relational (as rhetoric is not just speaking but implies a linkage between speaker and listeners) and as implying the coexistence of content and emotions, with style bringing together the what and the how.⁵⁸ This can be connected fruitfully to Aristotle’s understanding of humans as perceiving the world through *aisthesis*. Going beyond presenting pure knowledge alone, rhetoric implies the effective use of particular styles that appeal to

the senses and invoke emotions, thus doing the work of persuasion. Rhetoric may well be expanded toward broader modes of expression than oratory alone, including all kinds of sensational forms that seek to persuade.

Religion, then, is about the link between humans and the divine. In order for that link to be experienced as genuine, sensational forms must be persuasive. Even Barth, wary of aestheticization, acknowledged that God “persuades” human beings through “shape and form.”⁵⁹ The importance of diverse sensational forms is all the more obvious in the study of Pentecostalism, with its rich material culture and experiential modes of worship (being filled with the Holy Spirit). Once sensational forms are seen as indispensable for evoking and maintaining religious experience, it is clear that the styles that are part of these forms need to be at the center of attention.

A vignette can illustrate how persuasion features as a specific quality of sensational forms. In August 2009, I attended a service of the Lighthouse Chapel, a large Pentecostal denomination, in Accra. This denomination owns an exceptionally large modern building (constructed in the style of the national university). Reminiscent of the grandeur of Catholic cathedrals, the building is a sensational form with its own aesthetics of persuasion. The well-kept building with its many rows of seats—the largest in town—the huge stage in front from where the pastors and singers perform, and the latest audiovisual equipment are testament to Pentecostalism’s success, shining on all visitors. During the service I attended, the pastor preached about the problem of lacking the feeling of the Holy Spirit, which he likened—somewhat tongue in cheek—to the experience of a lack of (erotic) sensation in marriage: “Is the feeling still there?” Clearly, the need for each and every believer to feel and be touched by the Holy Spirit was stressed. Emphasizing the importance of powerful preaching, the pastor asked repeatedly, “Do I preach?” which was answered with, “Yes, you preach,” implying the recognition that he was not preaching artificially but truly speaking the word of God.

This affirms, once again, the importance of feeling and the raising of sensibilities to the divine. What’s also at stake is the pastor’s ability to invoke divine presence in a manner that is recognized and persuasive. The consent demanded from the participants to recognize the pastor’s power points to an aesthetics of persuasion that is geared toward making the presence of the Holy Spirit felt. This example shows that the aesthetics of persuasion is an inalienable part of religion in general and is part of outreaching religions such as Pentecostalism, with its globalizing agenda. Here the aes-

thetics of persuasion is used to affirm the link between humans and God, anchoring sensations in a credible cosmology.

Taking part in a Pentecostal distribution of the sensible, sensational forms induce an aesthetics of persuasion that affirms the Pentecostal view of the world in the face of unavoidable doubt and skepticism, given experiences of misfortune, illness, and poverty. Even though the authoritative index for the presence of the Holy Spirit lies in personal sensation, it would be wrong to regard Pentecostalism as purely individualistic. The personal link with the Holy Spirit offers individual mobility, yet it also emphasizes feelings of belonging to a larger, even global born-again community of believers. Certainly this is a community of a new kind, unlike the ordered congregational structures that characterize historical mission churches, yet nonetheless binding believers via shared sensational forms that generate—reminiscent of Émile Durkheim’s analysis of the effects of participation in religious rituals—feelings of effervescence.⁶⁰ The Pentecostal aesthetics of persuasion is thus mobilized to make new converts—through the staging of miracles and other spectacular mass events, for example. In that sense, the Pentecostal aesthetics of persuasion operates within a larger politics of belonging, characterized by partly competing and partly overlapping definitions of the sensible and modes of sensational appeal.

Epilogue

Christianity is a world religion by virtue of its foundational premise, grounded in the experience of Pentecost, which marked the replacement of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Although the spread of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on portability and mobility signals a new kind of religiosity, I do not intend here to frame Pentecostalism as entirely distinct from other branches of Christianity. My concern is to recapture aesthetics for the study of Pentecostalism in order to develop an alternative to the Protestant lens, which is often used to analyze Pentecostalism but which is blind to the importance of sensation. More broadly, the study of Protestantism itself suffers by not questioning Protestant self-descriptions that tend to stress an iconoclastic, antiaesthetic stance. This is deeply problematic, as there cannot be an antiaesthetic religion, notwithstanding assertions made from an internal religious perspective. Such assertions should not be taken for granted, let alone elevated to the level of scholarly concepts. This then opens up a space for theorizing both Pentecostalism and global Christianity, past

and present. This allows us to challenge, for instance, some simplistic distinctions between Catholicism, often understood in terms of “magical religiosity” and as indebted to things, and Protestantism, regarded as a model “salvation religion” and hence as rejecting aesthetics, form, and images. While such distinctions may be mobilized repeatedly in religious self-representations, as scholars we need to transcend such claims in favor of a more balanced view that acknowledges aesthetics—and materiality—as being a fundamental part of Christianity and of religion in general.

Using the concepts of the sensational form and the aesthetics of persuasion, I have sought to open up alternative methods for theorizing and exploring global Christianity, especially Pentecostalism. Stressing the importance of sensation and aesthetics, my concern has not been to *celebrate* the feeling body as a portable site of truth and pleasurable immediate experience but rather to show how the body and sensations are subject to powerful (competing) politico-religious formations. Aesthetics should not be depoliticized or dismissed as inferior to rational thinking and forms of mobilization, but it should be taken as central to the formation of personal and collective modes of being and belonging. This calls for a sophisticated analysis of what aesthetics does and does not render sensible, especially in the fields of religion and politics, by appealing to the body and inducing sensations. Emphasizing personal bodily sensation as the ultimate index for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism not only epitomizes the centrality of the body as a harbinger of truth and identity in our time, but its global popularity also emphasizes the necessity for scholars (and practitioners) in the fields of religion and politics to come to terms with the body, sensations, and experience. Weber’s observation that universal outreach and the reappraisal of art and aesthetics go together—even though he saw this as fallback into “magical religiosity”—should therefore be taken seriously: global Christianity requires attention to aesthetics, understood in the broad sense.

Notes

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1 Matthew 28:19–20 (English Standard Version).

2 Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago: Uni-

- versity of Chicago Press, 2009), 208. I would like to stress that this essay does not aspire to give an overview on recent work on Pentecostalism and globalization. See also André Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Latin America and Africa*, ed. A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 41–61; and Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 117–43.
- 3 Thomas J. Csordas, *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4–5.
 - 4 See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Peter L. Berger, "Max Weber Is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today" (paper presented at the 100th anniversary conference celebrating Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, October 2004), available at www.economyandsociety.org/events/Berger_paper.pdf (accessed 30 April 2008).
 - 5 Birgit Meyer, "Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity, and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20.2 (2007): 5–28.
 - 6 See, for example, Matthew Engelke, "Material Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, ed. Robert Orsi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); David Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London: Routledge, 2010); Peter J. Pels, "The Modern Fear of Matter: Reflections on the Protestantism of Victorian Science," *Material Religion* 4.3 (2008): 264–83; and Jeremy Stolow, *Orthodox by Design: Judaism, Print Politics, and the ArtScroll Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
 - 7 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006).
 - 8 See, for example, Clifford Geertz's definition of religion ("Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* [New York: Basic Books, 1973], 87–125) that has been paradigmatic until quite recently. For critiques, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, eds., *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).
 - 9 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. and ed. Talcott Parsons (1905; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).
 - 10 Engelke, *Material Religion*; Pels, "Modern Fear"; and Keane, *Christian Modern*.
 - 11 E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. 2, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (1871; New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 8.
 - 12 Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber:*

- Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1948; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 341.
- 13 Ibid.
 - 14 Ibid.; my emphasis.
 - 15 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 399–634, 608–9.
 - 16 Ibid., 610.
 - 17 Weber, “Religious Rejections,” 343. This suspicion with regard to the emotions and aesthetic appeal was also echoed in Weber’s critique that modern men eschew moral judgments, preferring judgments of taste (ibid., 342)—an observation that, as Bernice Martin argues in discussing Weber’s take on aesthetics (“The Aesthetics of Latin American Pentecostalism: The Sociology of Religion and the Problem of Taste,” in *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance, and Ritual*, ed. Elizabeth Arweck and William Keenan [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], 140), prefigures Jean Baudrillard’s analysis of modern consumer society.
 - 18 Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
 - 19 Martin, “Aesthetics,” 141.
 - 20 Ibid., 143.
 - 21 Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips, “Aesthetics,” in *Key Words in Religion, Media, and Culture*, ed. David Morgan (London: Routledge, 2008), 22–24.
 - 22 *Aisthesis* designates “our corporeal capability on the basis of a power given in our psyche to perceive objects in the world via our five different sensorial modes . . . and at the same time a specific constellation of sensations as a whole.” Understood in this way, *aisthesis* refers to “our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it” Meyer and Verrips, “Aesthetics,” 21.
 - 23 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790; Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2001).
 - 24 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 70–101.
 - 25 Ibid., 13.
 - 26 Jojada Verrips, “Aisthesis and An-aesthesia,” *Ethnologia Europaea* 35.1–2 (2006): 27–33; and Meyer and Verrips, “Aesthetics.” See also Brent Plate, *Walter Benjamin, Religion, and Aesthetics: Rethinking Religion through the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.
 - 27 Brent Plate, *Walter Benjamin, Religion, and Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 24.
 - 28 The opposition between art and religion that Weber invokes still informs the thinking of many scholars in those fields up until our time. Scholars in the arts are eager to assert the autonomy of art vis-à-vis religion; this shows today, for instance, in the rejection of religiously motivated charges of blasphemy. See James Elkins and David Morgan, eds., *Re-enchantment (The Art Seminar)* (London: Routledge, 2009).
 - 29 While de facto iconoclasm was limited, its continuous invocation as Protestantism’s mark of distinction is telling for the antiaesthetic, antimaterial stance that is often espoused in Protestant self-representation theologians. At the same time, as David Morgan has convincingly shown, images have long had a place in Protestant worship. David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

- 30 Cited in Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal, "Religieuze Existentie en Aesthetische Aanschouwing" ("Religious Existence and Aesthetic Contemplation") (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 1948), 81.
- 31 Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- 32 Martin, "Aesthetics," 146.
- 33 Barth quoted in Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27; my emphasis.
- 34 Just like Schleiermacher, from whose Romanticist emphasis on feeling, however, Barth stood worlds apart.
- 35 Of course, as Viladesau also argues, aesthetics and form can be accommodated more easily in Catholic theology which is less suspicious of human-made forms being doomed to become idolatric (for instance as developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, which places aesthetics "in the context of the Platonic-Aristotelian metaphysical tradition of the analogy of being," see Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 30). This difference between Catholic and Protestant approaches is still discernible in current theological work on aesthetics.
- 36 Asad, *Genealogies*; and Keane, *Christian Modern*.
- 37 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1920; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998).
- 38 Birgit Meyer, "Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion" (inaugural lecture, VU University, Amsterdam, October 6, 2006); Meyer and Verrips, "Aesthetics"; and Birgit Meyer, "From Imagined Communities to Aesthetic Formations: Religious Mediations, Sensational Forms and Styles of Binding," in *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*, ed. Birgit Meyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–28.
- 39 Collin Campbell critiqued Weber's limitation to one aspect of Protestant religiosity—its work ethics, stemming from despair about predestination theology—and his neglect of the sphere of emotions that became central to the formation of religious experience in Romanticism. Collin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
- 40 Morgan, *Visual Piety*.
- 41 Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, 210.
- 42 Chris Oyakhilome, *The Seven Spirits of God: Divine Secrets to the Miraculous* (Chelmsford: LoveWorld Publications, 2006).
- 43 Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, 128–29.
- 44 See also R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
- 45 Rancière, *Politics*, 12.
- 46 Ibid., 13.
- 47 All the same, Merleau-Ponty's view that "the sensible . . . is nothing other than a certain way of being in the world . . . so that sensation is literally a form of communion" (cited in Morgan, who adds that Merleau-Ponty "explicitly alluded to the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist" [*Religion and Material Culture*, 10]), is intriguing in proposing a link between sensation and communion.
- 48 Rancière, *Politics*, 29.

- 49 See also Claire Colebrook ("Agamben: Aesthetics, Potentiality, and Life," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107.1 (2008): 107–20) on Agamben's similar view of aesthetics. Exactly because, as I stressed before, it is important to develop a critique of aesthetics, it would be mistaken to reject aesthetics altogether, be it in conjunction with religion (as outlined in section I), or politics. It is highly problematic to concede the terrain of the body and aesthetics to right-wing populism. See also Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- 50 Beth Hinderliter et al., eds., *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 1.
- 51 Ibid.; and Meyer, *Aesthetic Formations*.
- 52 Here I cannot go into the recent literature on political theologies that emerged partly in response to the incapacity of secularization theory to explain the public presence and appeal of religion today. While the bringing together of politics and religion in one framework is of central importance, I miss a concern with sensations—and a broader understanding of aesthetics in this literature.
- 53 Verrips, "Anaesthesia"; see also Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Art Works Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 3–41; and Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).
- 54 Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 13.
- 55 Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Saints, Ancestors, and Charismatics in African Politics: Media and Religion in Ghana's 2008 Democratic Elections" (paper presented at Sensations: Religious Mediations and the Formation of Identities, Accra, Ghana, August 15–18, 2009).
- 56 Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, ch. 6.
- 57 Mattijs van de Port, "Visualizing the Sacred. Video Technology, 'Televisual' Style and the Religious Imagination in Bahian Candomblé," *American Ethnologist* 33.3 (2006): 444–62.
- 58 Limitations of space prevent me from delving deeper into Aristotelian rhetoric, Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, Loeb Classical Library No. 193, trans. G. H. Freese (London: Heinemann, 1926).
- 59 Barth quoted in Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 27.
- 60 Meyer, *Aesthetic Formations*.